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RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1341
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 0941
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 0014
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1126

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000477

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ROME PASS TO HQ MFO SINAI AMB. LAROCCO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [FJ](#)

SUBJECT: FIJI MILITARY CASTS BLAME ON AUSTRALIA AND NEW
ZEALAND; COUP PLANS REPORTEDLY CONTINUE

REF: A. SUVA 471 (AND PREVIOUS)

[1](#)B. USDAO SUVA 051844Z NOV 06

[1](#)C. SUVA 393

[1](#)D. SUVA 401

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Summary

[1](#)1. (S) With RFMF Commander Bainimarama's return to Suva, the Fiji Police reportedly have indications that coup planning continues. RFMF senior officers are directing media attacks at Australia, New Zealand, and Police Commissioner Hughes. Vice President Madraiwiwi counseled dialogue in a Remembrance Day address. A Great Council of Chiefs meeting is scheduled for Thursday. The Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) was preparing a Forum Ministers meeting for Friday until Qarase scuttled that today. If a coup is to occur, timing remains unclear, and we would not expect such an event to be directed against U.S. citizens and interests. Bainimarama reportedly remains unhappy with Amb. Dinger for speaking publicly in late September to correct a misimpression the Commodore had left with the media about the U.S. military view of proper civil-military relations. Our Aussie and Kiwi colleagues continue to query whether we will cancel the PACOM invitation for Bainimarama to attend the CHODS in KL. End summary.

Bainimarama returns

[1](#)2. (C) Commodore Bainimarama arrived back in Fiji early Saturday morning, Nov. 4. He has been meeting with senior RFMF leaders, but he has made no public statements since then, leaving the media to the RFMF Deputy, Capt. (N) Teleni and Land Forces Commander Lt.Col. Driti.

Raising doubts about Aussies and Kiwis

[1](#)3. (S) It appears a concerted effort is under way to divert media attention away from the RFMF and against New Zealand, Australia, and Police Commissioner Hughes (an Aussie). Both Australia and New Zealand sent small contingents of security personnel into Suva late last week. The Aussies sent about ten, mostly from the military; the Kiwis sent four from the police. In public statements, the RFMF has accused the newcomers of bringing in suspicious containers and evading customs. In a press event on the weekend, Driti reportedly suggested Australia is thinking of invading. He suggested Australia "wants Fiji to fail and become a failed state so that they can come in and dominate us." But, he said, the RFMF will not accept any foreign intervention. We will stop

them." Driti said "it will be insane of them and will be like declaring war."

Anger at Police Commissioner; request to resign

14. (S) Per Ref B, Bainimarama reportedly returned to Suva angry at Commissioner Hughes and the police for investigating him and for going public about the RFMF's removal of a container of ammunition from the Suva wharf without a permit. Hughes has said he will invite Bainimarama to a one-on-one session this week to discuss the police investigations against the RFMF and Bainimarama in particular. The RFMF's Teleni has said publicly that the military will cooperate. Actually, behind the scenes, Teleni sent Hughes a letter on Nov. 3 asking him to resign, since, in the RFMF view, there is no way Hughes, with first loyalties to Australia and with prejudices against the RFMF, can conduct a fair investigation. Teleni accused Hughes of bringing "ridicule" to the RFMF.

Coup planning reportedly continues

15. (S) Reportedly Commissioner Hughes told a good source today that police sources have indications RFMF coup preparations continue, and several prominent persons have been approached to take cabinet portfolios in an interim government. Timing reportedly remains unclear. We continue to expect that if a coup occurs it will not be directed against U.S. people or interests in Fiji.

VP counsels dialogue at Remembrance Day; senior RFMF absent

16. (U) During a Remembrance Day ceremony in downtown Suva on Nov. 6, Vice President Madraiwiwi acknowledged the current

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tensions, urged all sides to recall lessons from the events of 1987 and 2000, and counseled that dialogue is the preferred course. He endorsed the Great Council of Chiefs meeting scheduled for Thursday, Nov. 9. Police Commissioner Hughes was in attendance, but senior RFMF officers were not.

Fiji puts off PIF Ministerial meeting

17. (U) We are told that the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat today heard from PM Qarase that he is not

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prepared to seek a Forum Foreign Ministers meeting at this time under the auspices of the Biketewa Declaration (see ref A) to discuss the Fiji situation. The PIF was gearing up to host that meeting on Friday, Nov. 10, but has now stood down.

The Commodore and the Ambassador

18. (S) In a recent Bainimarama conversation with the DG of MFO Sinai (reported to us by e-mail) the Commodore reportedly "railed" against Amb. Dinger, relating back to an incident in late September (see refs C and D). At the time, the Ambassador publicly corrected the record on U.S. views re civil-military relations when Bainimarama reportedly told the media he had been motivated to return to public criticism against the Qarase Government by a U.S. military request at the Pacific Armies Management Seminar (PAMS) for frank and open discussion in that forum.

CHODS invitation: continued queries

19. (C) Our Australian and New Zealand colleagues asked again today if the USG has decided on whether to rescind the PACOM invitation for Bainimarama to attend the CHODS conference in KL. He is scheduled to depart Fiji Saturday, Nov. 11.

Comment

10. (S) It remains possible that the reports of coup planning

are an elaborate RFMF information operation intended to pressure PM Qarase to withdraw controversial bills and clean up alleged corruption. Unfortunately, the Fiji Police, at least, seem to believe the more likely explanation is that the coup planning is for real.

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